DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 437 CG 016 972

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TITLE Theory and Tests of a Cognitive Behavioral Model of Burnout.
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association (29th, Atlanta, GA, March 23-26, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Burnout; Cognitive Processes; Expectation; *Human Services; Models; *Test Reliability; *Test Validity
IDENTIFIERS *Meier Burnout Assessment

ABSTRACT

For people-helping professionals, the concept of burnout describes the physical and emotional exhaustion they feel on the job. A cognitive-behavioral model defines burnout as a state in which individuals expect few rewards and considerable punishment from work, due to lack of valued reinforcement, controllable outcomes, or personal competence. Expectations are a central component of this model since they indicate an individual's interactions with the environment and are closely linked with behavior and feelings. Three types of expectations (reinforcement, work outcome, and efficacy expectations) may influence burnout. To aid empirical research concerning burnout, the Meier Burnout Assessment (MBA), a 25-item true/false test, was developed to measure cognitions and expectations related to burnout. To check for internal consistency and concurrent validity in the MBA, undergraduate students completed both the MBA and the Maslach Burnout Inventory, and their scores on the two tests were compared. Statistical analyses showed satisfactory internal consistency, concurrent validity, and predictive validity for the MBA. A copy of the MBA along with the item-total correlations is included. (WAS)

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THEORY AND TESTS OF A COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL MODEL OF BURNOUT

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CG016972

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Atlanta, GA, March 23-26, 1983.

Theory and Tests of A Cognitive Behavioral Model of Burnout

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The concept of burnout, since Freudenberger (1974) first introduced the term, has been accorded an enormous amount of attention by a large number of people-helping professionals (e.g., Maslach, 1981). Perhaps its appeal can be traced to the word itself, for 'burnout' accurately describes, for many people-helpers, the sense of physical and emotional exhaustion they feel on the job. Despite the subjective clarity of the term, considerable confusion exists in the burnout literature about just what the phenomenon entails, its causes and its correlates. In response to questions about the validity of the burnout construct, Meier (in press) developed a cognitive behavioral model of burnout based on the theories of Bandura, Rotter, and Lofquist and Dawis.

Meier (in press) defines burnout as a state in which individuals expect little reward and considerable punishment from work because of a lack of valued reinforcement, controllable outcomes, or personal competence. Expectations are proposed as a central component of this model because it is expectations that indicate how individuals interact with their environment and because expectations are closely linked with behavior and feelings (Bandura, 1977).

Three types of expectations are proposed to influence burnout. Reinforce- ment expectations are descriptions about whether certain work outcomes meet or will meet one's

implicit or explicit goals. Work outcomes, the result of work experiences, differ in the value and meaning individuals place on them. Dawis and Lofquist (1978) indicate that workers actively compare their present needs with the reinforcers expected to be present in the work environment. A second type of expectation important to burnout, outcome or contingency expectations, refer to descriptions about which behaviors lead to certain outcomes (Bandura, 1977). While reinforcement expectations describe whether certain outcomes meet desired goals, outcome expectations describe what behaviors are required to obtain those outcomes. Thus, lack of control of outcomes, or lack of knowledge of what behaviors produce desired outcomess, can lead to burnout. Finally, efficacy expectations are descriptions of personal competence. While outcome expectations refer to knowledge of behaviors that produce desired outcomes, self-efficacy refers to expectations of personal competence in executing that productive behavior (Bandura, 1977).

The concepts of reinforcement, outcome and efficacy expectations converge with other descriptions of burned-out persons. For example, Maslach and Jackson's (1981) notion of emotional exhaustion is similar to that of reinforcement expectations in that both ideas indicate that burned-out persons can no longer feel pleasure or tolerate pain. In a passage that draws a link between job stress and outcome expectations, Crase (1980) discusses economic conditions that

are leading faculty across the country to doubt their ability to affect higher education and to improve their lot. In other words, faculty may be experiencing a loss of perceived control over the educational environment in which they work. Finally, Weiskopf's application of Cooper and Marshall's (1976) stress model to teachers of exceptional children includes lack of perceived success (an efficacy problem) as a component of stress and eventual burnout.

A Measure of Burnout

Derived from Meier's model of burnout, the Meier Burnout Assessment (MBA) is a 25-item true-false test that assesses respondents' cognitions and expectations related to burnout. Test development was guided by Jackson's sequential system for personality scale development which stresses the importance of psychological theory, suppression of response style variance, scale homogeneity and generalizability, and scale convergent and discriminant validity.

Development of the MBA began by generating items through discussion with faculty and graduate students about burnout, a literature review of burnout, operationalizing Meier's burnout model, and review of related tests. The 80 items

that were initially created were then presented to four judges for classification into the expectancy categories of Meier's burnout model; if three of four judges agreed that an item belonged to one expectancy group, it was so classified. Next, the instrument, containing 53 items, was administered along with several other tests to samples of undergraduate students. Item analyses were performed, eliminating items that were endorsed in one direction by more than 80 per cent of the sample, that possessed an item-total correlation of less than .20 (most items were in the .30 and .40 range), or items that had a significant correlation with the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale.

A Cronbach alpha computed for the MBA equaled .79, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (n=368). To check for concurrent validity, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was adapted for use with undergraduates; a Cronbach alpha computed for this version of the MBI equaled .83. The Pearson product-moment correlation between the MBA and the MBI equaled .58 ($p < .01$), indicating that the rationally-derived MBA is measuring a dimension similar to that of the empircally-created MBI (all three factors and both dimensions of the MBI were combined to create one measure of burnout).

Correlation between the MBA and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale equaled -.15 ($p < .08$), while the corre-

lation between social desirability and the MBI was significant (r = -.24, p < .05). With both instruments persons scoring low on burnout tended to have higher social desirability scores.

As a test of predictive validity, scores from the MBA and the MBI were used to predict the memory performance scores on a test of free recall by the same group of undergraduate students (n = 141). Both instruments significantly predicted memory performance, with the MBA (F = 8.20, df = 1,122, p < .005) slightly outperforming the MBI (F = 5.35, df = 1,109, p < .02).

Items on the MBA, along with their item-total corrected correlations, are presented in Table 1.

The interested reader is referred to Meier (1983) for a construct validity study of burnout utilizing a multitrait-multimethod approach. Three constructs--depression, burnout, and personal orderliness--were employed in a study of college faculty.

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AN ACADEMIC SURVEY

This survey is intended to help us understand various expectations, beliefs, and thoughts about this university you have or have had this semester. This information could be useful to teachers and counselors, among others, in designing courses and helping individual students.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please honestly decide whether the item is TRUE or FALSE for you. Mark True or False on the basis of what you actually think and believe, not what you think you should choose or what you would like to be true. Please answer these items carefully but do not spend too much time on any one item.
(**Numbers** following each item are item-total correlations)

1. If I'm not getting what I want from a class, I won't put any effort into it. .26

2. People I associate with at school help me be self-confident. .23

3. I can do all the tasks required to be a successful student. .28

4. School was once very enjoyable for me, but as time goes on, I enjoy it less.
.46

5. My previous school work causes me to doubt what I can do now. .36

6. I resent it when teachers give me some extra work to do.
.30

7. One must be very competent, adequate, and achieving to consider oneself worthwhile.
.25

8. I worry a lot about situations where I am being tested.
.36

9. When I start to get bored with school work, I know what to do next.
.30

10. I find school intellectually stimulating, challenging, and full of variety.
.39

11. I tend to worry a lot about new classes and material.
.32

12. People who do not achieve competency in at least one area should feel bad about themselves.
.20

13. Many of the activities I once found enjoyable in school are no longer much fun.
.41

14. If I were to do badly in one year at school, I would feel that I would never do well.
.26

15. I can't wait for the end of the semester to arrive.
.28

16. Whenever I experience failure at school, I start to feel as if I am a failure at everything.
.31

17. My only motivation for doing school work is that I know I have to do it.
.41

18. The best color to describe school for me right now is grey. .48

19. I'd be very upset if I had to leave school because it's enjoyable to me.
.33

20. I have a lot of self-doubt about school.
.46

21. I often long for excitement while I am doing school work. .30

22. There's really no way to alter who controls the 'goodies' in school. .28

23. Concerning the important matters that affect my school work, I have considerable control. .27

24. I have considerable talent for school work. .30

25. Teachers are the real power about whether school is enjoyable. .24